



CITY OF BIRMINGHAM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: People, Prosperity, Place, Partnership, Performance

WHY WE DEVELOPED THIS PLAN

This is the City of Birmingham's first full comprehensive plan since 1961 and the first comprehensive plan based on a community process. With community consensus behind it, the 2012 City of Birmingham Comprehensive Plan puts the city on a new strategic path for the 21st century towards a renaissance of city neighborhoods, a strong economy with more jobs, and more opportunity and quality of life for all.

HOW WE DEVELOPED THIS PLAN

The City of Birmingham Comprehensive Plan was developed through a process of broad public participation by citizens, business owners and other stakeholders. The planning process touched over 2,300 people whether through citywide forums, workshops in different parts of the city, topical workshops, or open house events. Stakeholders from all walks of life gave many hours of their time to serve on the Steering Committee that helped shape the plan.



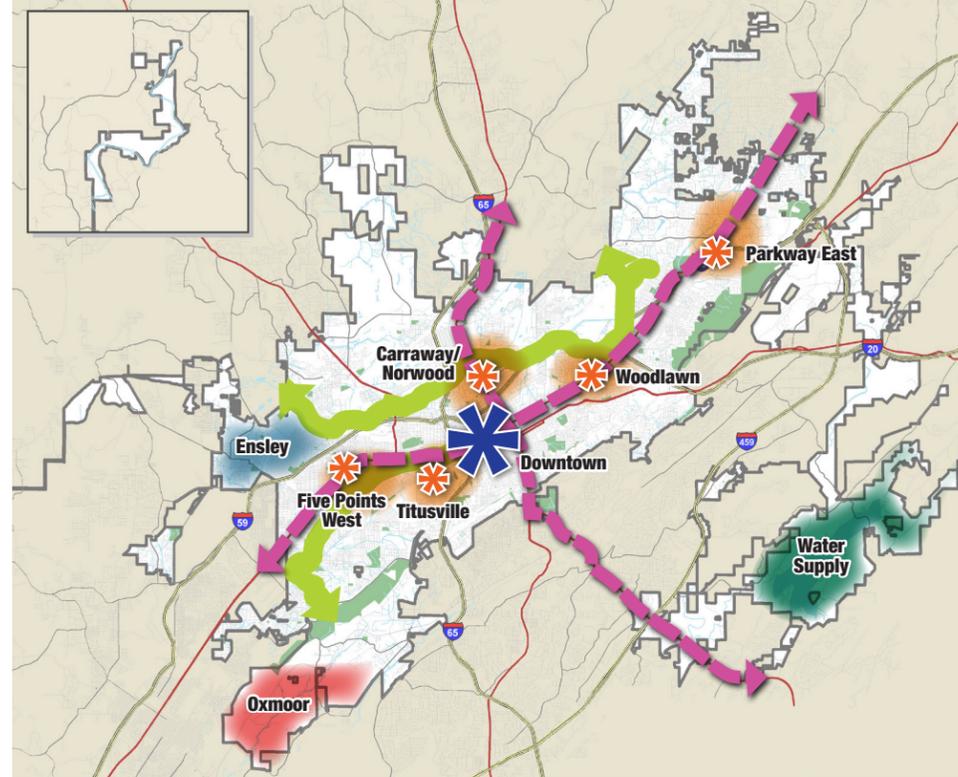
HOW WE'LL PUT THE PLAN TO WORK

The purpose of planning is to get to action. The Comprehensive Plan includes a detailed implementation plan setting out the What, How, Who, and When for specific actions to achieve the goals of the plan. A Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee made up of planning commissioners and citizens will serve as the stewards of the plan, advising government and other partners, and monitoring progress. Annual public hearings will

ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Establish working group to develop sports tourism development plan.	Lead: GBOVB. Support: Mayor's Office of Economic Development; venue owners and events organizers
Conduct market study on increasing cargo service at Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport.	Lead: Birmingham Airport Authority
Organize advocacy efforts related to life sciences research funding.	Lead: BBA. Support: Mayor, UAB, SRI
Inaugurate local funding campaign to support expansion of life sciences research.	Lead: UAB. Support: local entrepreneurial support community
Initiate strategic planning for expanding the applied research capacities of UAB school of engineering.	Lead: UAB. Support: BBA bringing relevant industry representatives to the table
Capitalize Innovation Fund.	Lead: BBA. Support: UAB, private philanthropic investors; city
Capitalize proof-of-concept fund.	Lead: BBA. Support: private investors; city
Develop Entrepreneurial District Master Plan.	Lead: ONB and City Planning Division. Support: input from entrepreneurial support community

give citizens a report on implementation and the plan will be used in capital improvement planning, work plans, and to guide land use decision making. Partnerships with residents, businesses, medical and educational institutions, and nonprofits will be critical to success.

BIRMINGHAM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STRATEGIC POLICY MAP



STRATEGIC MIXED-USE CENTERS

- Downtown Core
- Urban Villages

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY AREAS

- Neighborhood revitalization
- Urban Agriculture Innovation District
- Planned Development Area

ROBUST GREEN CONNECTIONS

- Major greenways
- Parks and open space
- Conservation

TRANSPORTATION CHOICE

- Enhanced transit



Fifty years after 1963: FULFILLING THE PROMISE FOR 21ST-CENTURY BIRMINGHAM

Honor our *past*
Meet the challenges
of our *present*
Build on assets for a
future of opportunity

TEN GAME-CHANGING STRATEGIES FOR THE CITY'S FUTURE:

PEOPLE

- Prepare students and workers for 21st century jobs through high quality career education and a coordinated and responsive workforce development system.
- Reinvigorate the citizen participation process.

PROSPERITY

- Cultivate innovation: strengthen and promote Birmingham's entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Capitalize on the city's economic drivers by targeting life science, advanced manufacturing, and entrepreneurship.

PLACE

- Create transit-ready urban villages through investment in strategic neighborhood areas to make a visible difference.
- Invest in quality of life: design excellence, complete streets, marked bicycle routes, well maintained parks.
- Create and implement a Downtown Connections Plan to link all the attractions and neighborhoods in downtown.

PARTNERSHIP

- End working in "silos:" cooperate, coordinate and collaborate across municipalities, communities, constituencies, institutions, agencies, and departments.

PERFORMANCE

- Accelerate revitalization through a city redevelopment authority and land bank and a comprehensive property information system.
- Prepare an annual public report on progress implementing the comprehensive plan.

Birmingham's Vision for the 21st Century

In 2032, the City of Birmingham leads the South as a community of choice and opportunity: diverse, prosperous, sustainable, and beautiful.

- > **People choose the City of Birmingham as a place to live.** Our neighborhoods are attractive, walkable, well maintained, and safe. The blighted properties of the past have been transformed into new or renovated housing, greenways and green open spaces, or other community assets. Across the city, there are appealing housing choices for all kinds of households: young singles and couples, families with children, empty nesters, and retirees.
- > **Birmingham has a connected network of walkable urban places.** Our compact, mixed use, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood centers support an enhanced and efficient

transit system, and a network of safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle routes links neighborhoods with city destinations.

- > **Birmingham is innovative and prosperous, with a diversified and sustainable economy.** Education, innovation and investment have grown the economy and reduced poverty by creating new economic opportunities. As a community of learning, Birmingham offers excellent educational options for all age levels and interests, creating well-educated citizens and a modern workforce qualified for 21st century jobs. Vacant or underutilized industrial sites are finding new uses that benefit the city and its economy. Because our culture of opportunity supports innovation and creativity, our diversified economy supports entrepreneurial start-ups and creates new jobs, ranging from businesses that emerge from the interdisciplinary research of UAB to

our acclaimed food culture and arts scene.

- > **Birmingham is the most sustainable, "greenest" city in the South.** The city has become cleaner, healthier, more energy- and resource-efficient, and more attractive as a place to live. We have worked within the city and through regional partnerships to improve air quality, preserve sensitive lands, and protect and enjoy our excellent water resources. Our parks and greenways provide convenient, safe environments for all residents to play and exercise. Everyone has access to our city's premier health services, healthy food choices, and healthy lifestyles.
- > **Birmingham's success is built on local and regional partnerships.** We created strong partnerships encompassing citizens, the business community, institutions, nonprofits, and governments to transform Birmingham into the best place to live, work, study, and play in the South.



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WHAT'S IN THE 2012 CITY OF BIRMINGHAM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN? IMAGINE ► PLAN ► ACT

The Comprehensive Plan covers a broad range of topics in 15 chapters about current trends, the planning process and all aspects of community life that affect the way our city can develop in the future.

IMAGINE

What kind of place do we want to be in the 21st century?

- **Part I: Setting the Stage.** Our vision for the future, guiding principles for planning, the public process, and where we are starting from today.

PLAN

How do we get there?

Strategies to achieve the vision.

- **Part II: Green Systems.** Nature and environment, parks and recreation, and sustainability and green practices.
- **Part III: Neighborhoods, Housing and Community Renewal.** Sustaining, enhancing and renewing neighborhoods to provide a good quality of life.
- **Part IV: Prosperity and Opportunity.** Supporting and growing the industries that drive the city's economy, while reinforcing the economy's building blocks—education, workforce development, entrepreneurship, and quality of life to retain and attract talent—and continuing the downtown renaissance.
- **Part V: Strengthening City Systems and Networks.** Expanding transportation choice based on land use strategies and providing excellent city services.

ACT

How do we get started?

- **Part IV: From Plan to Action.** A new development framework of land use, regulation and urban design, with step-by-step actions to achieve the vision and monitor progress.

BIRMINGHAM'S POWER OF PLACE

High quality of life—resident satisfaction in daily living—is the foundation of successful 21st century communities. Businesses locate where people want to be, and good neighborhoods, along with a great open space system and a vibrant cultural life are among the key attractions that any city and metropolitan area can offer.

With its ridge and valley topography, lush greenery, historic downtown, and neighborhoods that emerged from small towns, Birmingham has the pedestrian-friendly street grid, neighborhood centers, and local parks that people increasingly seek in a place to live. At the same time, the city's large nature parks and emerging greenway system will make it possible for Birmingham residents to experience nature without leaving the city limits. This combination of urban lifestyles with access to nature creates a powerful mix for quality of life.

the big picture

Birmingham has many assets—economic, cultural, historic—but it also has to grapple with many challenges. The city needs better tools, better systems, more internal and external communication, and enhanced partnerships to achieve Birmingham citizens' vision for the future.

Raise the city's "information quotient" for data and evidence-based decision making

- A comprehensive property information database, a real estate market analysis on a block to block basis, detailed data on city jobs and enterprises, and an asset management system—result in

more informed decision making and effective use of taxpayer dollars.

Use the right tools for each job

- A professionally-run Birmingham Redevelopment Authority and Land Bank along with a high profile system of coordinated code enforcement will deploy a variety of tools to eliminate blight and redevelop neighborhoods.

Be strategic, focused, and systematic to create visible success

- Target coordinated investments in housing, infrastructure, transportation, parks, facilities, and workforce and social services to areas with assets, so that visible

successes can create confidence and increasingly leverage private investment.

- Target incentives to support emerging industries, entrepreneurship and microbusiness, and revitalization in designated Urban Villages and Strategic Opportunity Areas.

No more silos: coordinate, cooperate, collaborate

- Create a Housing Policy Advisory Council that includes government, the housing authority, neighborhoods, housing developers, realtors, and economic development specialists.

GREEN SYSTEMS

Natural Resources and Environmental Constraints

- Work with partners to protect and enhance water quality.

Parks and Recreation

- Work towards a goal of a park within walking distance of every resident.
- Update the 1996 Park and Recreation Plan, and include a section on management and maintenance of the system.
- Implement the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System.



Sustainability and Green Practices

- Make City government a model of resource-efficient and green practices.
- Develop incentives for green building and stormwater management.
- Use natural drainage systems where possible.
- Promote white roofs as an easy way to mitigate the urban heat island.

NEIGHBORHOODS, HOUSING, HISTORIC PRESERVATION, AND COMMUNITY RENEWAL

Good neighborhoods are the foundation of successful cities. Regardless of household income level, neighborhoods should provide safety, decent and sanitary housing, well-maintained infrastructure, environmental and aesthetic amenities such as street trees, and easy access to parks, public spaces, and neighborhood retail and services.

- Create a **community-based Housing Policy Advisory Council** including representatives of government staff, neighborhood organizations, for-profit and non-profit housing developers, realtors, and representatives of economic development organizations.
- Create a **Public Facilities Working Group** to meet regularly on city, county, state, federal, and school facilities decisions in order to ensure they further city goals for development.
- Establish a **rental housing code** to ensure that rental properties are fit for habitation.
- Create a set of **Framework Plans** for the 23 Communities in order to provide guidance on desired development.
- Create a **historic preservation ranking system** to guide decision making about programs and incentives.



COMMUNITY RENEWAL

Many of Birmingham's traditional neighborhoods have experienced decades of disinvestment, with the large number of abandoned houses and stores, tax delinquent properties, and vacant lots bearing witness to this reality. In addition, there are "environmental justice" neighborhoods affected by the legacy of industrial pollution and residential segregation.

- Pursue a **comprehensive and coordinated system to eliminate blight, assemble land and redevelop neighborhoods** in disinvested areas.
- Create a **comprehensive property information system**.
- Understand the details of neighborhood real estate markets by commissioning a **real estate market study at the block level**.
- Establish a **professional Redevelopment Authority and Land Bank** to take charge of blight elimination and redevelopment activities to create mixed-income neighborhoods.
- **Focus redevelopment activities strategically** on compact urban villages and their surrounding neighborhoods to create transit-ready centers and a visible difference to create confidence. Target coordinated housing, infrastructure, transportation, park, and service investments to create a successful mixed-income neighborhood.
- **Create an Urban Agriculture Innovation District in Ensley** to develop a for-profit district of intensive food production through hydroponics and aquaponics in buildings and land-based agriculture.



PROSPERITY AND OPPORTUNITY: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development recommendations for Birmingham revolve around four key priorities: supporting established and emerging industries; improving the

education system for all; supporting entrepreneurship and the city's role as a center of innovation; and continuing robust support for creating a live-work-play downtown.

Established and emerging industries

- Cultivate entrepreneurs and make it easy for them to stay in the City.
- Target a portion of money incentives to emerging industries.

Developing human capital

- Proceed with public school programs to improve student progress across the system
- Coordinate the workforce development system.

Sustaining Downtown

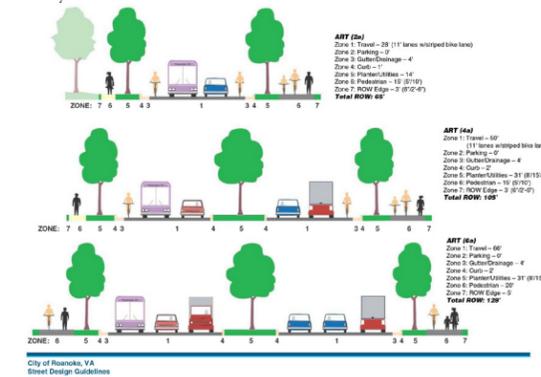
- Develop and implement a plan for the Entrepreneurial District and strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Develop and implement a Downtown Connections Plan to link downtown's activity centers and residential areas with streetscape improvements, ground floor activities, popup events, public art, and transit.
- Create a Contemporary Culture Furnace District from Railroad Park to Sloss Furnace to showcase Alabama fine crafts.
- Develop and implement a plan for the southeast quadrant of downtown.

STRENGTHENING CITY SYSTEMS: TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Offering more transportation choice—through better transit, bicycle facilities, and sidewalks—was at or near the top of Birmingham residents' desires for the city at every public meeting. While the city belongs to regional water and sewer systems, it controls the local road and drainage infrastructure. City facilities suffer from deferred maintenance.

Transportation

- **Integrate transportation and land use planning** to build up centers of density that can support enhanced transit systems such as bus rapid transit.
- Expand opportunities to walk and bike safely: implement the **"complete streets" policy** adopted by the Planning Commission, and the Red Rock Trail system pedestrian and bicycle routes.



- **Improve transit** service through creation of SuperStops at Five Points West and other locations to facilitate transfers and establish express routes.
- Develop policies to **make City facilities, buildings and operations models of resource efficiency** and sustainable practices.
- Set long term priorities for infrastructure by funding and implementing a **municipal asset management system** (including pavement management) linked to an up-to-date GIS (Geographic Information Systems) database.

IMPLEMENTATION

The plan includes an implementation plan that lays out potential actions, responsible parties, time frames (short-, medium- and long-term), and potential resources. Implementation will require strong partnerships including business, neighborhoods, institutions, nonprofits, and citizens.

Where's the money?

Serious plans attract funding and investment. Just having a plan developed through a participatory process demonstrates that the city knows where it wants to go, has a strategy to get there, and is creating the organizational capacity to get the job done. A wide diversity of funding sources must be pursued and coordinated. Over the long term, potential sources of funding to implement the strategies and achieve the goals of this plan include:

- Capital improvements bond funding
- Dedicated millages or sales taxes
- Property and sales tax abatements as incentives
- User fees and betterment fees to implement improvements and incentivize activities
- Tax Increment Financing
- Catalyst Funds (private investment funds with "patient capital").
- Federal grant programs that recognize that the Comprehensive Plan is aligned with federal program goals
- Cost savings from operating efficiencies
- Leveraged private investment through incentives such as waived fees, below-market sales of vacant land, limited-time tax abatements
- Foundation grants
- Volunteer activities

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AS A LIVING DOCUMENT

- **Designate a position in the City's Planning Division as the long-range planner to be the in-house expert on the Comprehensive Plan and implementation coordinator.**
- **Review implementation progress in annual public hearings at the Planning Commission and City Council.**
- **Use the Comprehensive Plan in creating departmental work plans, the budget and the capital improvement program, required planning documents for federal funding programs, and grant proposals.**
- **Schedule a public process every five years to review implementation progress on the Comprehensive Plan and to confirm or revise the Vision, Principles, and Goals.**
- **Update the Comprehensive Plan thoroughly at least every 20 years.**

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THANKS TO ALL THE CITIZENS WHO GAVE THEIR TIME TO BE ON THE STEERING COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUPS AND TO ATTEND PUBLIC MEETINGS.